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JUNE 22, 2004

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**DeNUCCI SAYS WEAK COMPUTER CONTROLS
COULD HARM TRIAL COURT OPERATIONS**

State Auditor Joe DeNucci reported today in an 80-page audit that a lack of controls in the management of the computer systems maintained by the Administrative Office of the Trial Court jeopardized the security, efficiency and availability of the courts' information technology resources.

The state's courts, which operate out of 130 facilities across the state and use over 6,000 workstations, have long been troubled by antiquated technology. For the past decade, the Trial Court has been attempting to upgrade its computerized systems and is currently implementing a \$75 million project known as MassCourts. DeNucci's audit indicated that the MassCourts project could be at risk unless the management problems identified in the report are corrected.

Major problems identified in DeNucci's report that require immediate attention include:

- **The Trial Court did not have the security controls necessary to prevent or detect unauthorized user access:** Computer use privileges were not deactivated for hundreds of persons no longer employed by the courts; passwords for many court employees were not changed for years; and some passwords consisted of as little as one character. As a result, unauthorized users could gain access to confidential information or alter records.
- **The Trial Court lacked written policies and procedures, including a risk assessment, for evaluating and monitoring IT controls and establishing accountability:** At the time of the audit, there was an almost complete lack of monitoring and evaluation of controls in the courts' information technology systems. This compromised the systems' integrity, security and availability. Furthermore, the lack of appropriate IT-related policies at that time placed the Trial Court's primary business objectives at risk.

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- **The Trial Court did not maintain a complete and accurate master list of IT inventory and did not require individual courts to maintain their own inventory lists:** As a result, the courts lacked assurance that the computer systems, valued at \$17 million, were properly accounted for and were protected from misuse, loss or theft.
- **The Trial Court lacked a business continuity plan for restoring automated functions in the event that its systems became inoperable or inaccessible:** Without an adequate plan that includes backup storage of computerized information, the operation of the state's entire court system could be jeopardized by a disaster.

DeNucci noted that the new Chief Justice for Administration and Management, who took office after the audit period, agrees with the audit's findings and recommendations and has already begun to implement corrective action, including deactivating IT access by former court employees. The Chief Justice called DeNucci's report "a thoughtful blueprint to guide our efforts to improve the IT environment."

"The fair and effective administration of justice in Massachusetts depends on protecting the court system's critical information from misuse, and improving efficiency in an already overburdened system," said DeNucci. "I am pleased that the new administration and management team in the Trial Court is committed to making significant improvements in the management of its technology and computerized systems."